

State Department review completed

Potential vulnerabilities of the new Soviet Regime

1. Malenkov's position may rest on an agreement with other top figures. This would encourage a jockeying for position. The dispatch with which the Soviet leaders moved to tighten

and streamline the USSR's administrative apparatus appeared as an effort to present a picture of complete unanimity within the Kremlin. Apparently they sought this to prevent confusion in the Communist world as to the continuity of Moscow's leadership and to dash expectations of an impending struggle for power.

Despite the pre-eminent position attained by Malenkov in the new regime, the fact that the top members of the old Politburo have been accorded prominence, with four of them renamed as deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers, suggests at least a temporary actual agreement among them and presents a united front to the world. It is believed that these shifts significantly lessen the possibility of any immediate struggle for power or any violent internal upheaval.

2. Molotov's demotion must be a source of disappointment:

As the US Embassy in Moscow points out, however, the fact that the new Moscow regime represents possibly the best balance among the top Soviet leaders does not necessarily mean that possible

[REDACTED]

noteworthy that Molotov previously accorded a place of prestige immediately below Stalin, is now consistently relegated to third place below Malenkov and Beria. In time, such treatment may strain the present facade of unity.

3. While there is no indication at present that Malenkov does not have full control of the power mechanisms, it will take much time for him to acquire a stature in any way similar to Stalin's. During this ~~time~~ period he is comparatively vulnerable.

At present there is no indication that Malenkov is not in full control of the mechanisms of power in the Soviet Union. Developments over the past several years have revealed the gradual ascendancy of his henchmen in the Party. [REDACTED]

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Nevertheless, in inheriting the mantle of Stalin, Malenkov has acquired a position which in the past has assumed more than control of police mechanisms. Neither Malenkov nor any other Russian now alive could immediately fill [REDACTED] departure of a unique

figure symbolizing authority in the Communist world. That the new regime is concerned with diminishing the shock effect of the loss of this symbol and discouraging any tendency to embark upon a new path is indicated by its emphasis on the continuation of Stalin's policies. It is likely that this emphasis will persist. The return to a war-time administrative setup also indicates an effort to ~~revert~~ resort to tried methods in the face of crisis.

Lacking Stalin's immense prestige, Malenkov may find it increasingly difficult to act as supreme arbiter over possibly opposing factions in the Presidium. Such would be the case particularly if in his efforts to pursue Stalin's policies Malenkov blundered significantly or encountered consistent failure. In such an event the internal potentially divisive forces whose existence has led to speculation of an immediate bitter struggle for power might become operative.

4. For the immediate period ahead Malenkov may have difficulty preventing and controlling factions inside foreign Communist Parties:

The international Communist movement is likely to be more susceptible to the shock of Stalin's death than the Soviet Union itself.

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Questions of prestige and of loyalty to a personally respected leader

are immediately of relatively greater importance in this sphere.

In countries such as France, for example, where there have been basic differences regarding tactics, factionalism may be ~~sharp~~ sharpened and adherence to policies dictated in Moscow.

5. Soviet control over Satellites may eventually weaken, although there is no immediate prospect of this:

The Kremlin's hold on its European Satellites represents another potential vulnerability. No immediate weakening is expected. However, special security precautions noted in Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Albania following the announcement of Stalin's illness suggested concern over this problem.

Yugoslav leaders, although not anticipating any important change for "perhaps a year or two," are optimistic regarding the weakening of Soviet control over the Satellites. Tito mentioned Albania particularly as a country ^{which} ~~where~~ might, in a struggle for succession to Stalin, escape Soviet domination.

6. The problem of Malenkov's relationship to Mao in the Asian parties is particularly real:

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From the points of view of the Kremlin, Soviet relations with China are likely to be a problem of primary interest. Concern over the position of China in the current crisis was indicated by circumstances surrounding Stalin's funeral. Malenkov, Beria, and Molotov gave special attention and emphasis to China in ~~the~~ their funeral orations. The same emphasis has been observed in Soviet propaganda broadcasts since Stalin's death. Furthermore, one of the first acts of the new regime was to appoint the new Deputy Foreign Minister Vasili Kuznetsov as Ambassador to Peiping, relieving Panyushkin. This is a significant step up in the caliber of representation.

Although Stalin's death~~er~~ is not expected to produce important immediate changes in Sino-Soviet relations or in China's adherence to the Communist movement, the Chinese Communists are not ~~like~~ likely to have unquestioning faith in the new Moscow leadership, which may be on trial in Peiping's eyes for some time to come. The Kremlin will probably continue to increase its careful efforts to make Peiping's contributions to the Communist cause appear worth-while in terms of Chinese self-interest.



While Mao Tse-tung now has greater prestige than any other figure, Soviet or non-Soviet, in the World Communist movement, he has never challenged Soviet leadership of that movement and will certainly not attempt to replace Stalin as world leader. Mao is recognized even by the Soviets, however, as second only to Stalin as an authority on Asian Communism. The Chinese Communists will probably seek a larger role in formulating and directing the Asian Communist program. Moscow may well feel an enhanced Chinese role to be in the Soviet interest in Asia as long as Moscow has no reason to doubt Mao's allegiance or to view Peiping as a threat to world-wide Soviet control of the Communist movement.

